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December 6, 2018

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 18-336 and CC Docket No. 92-105 regarding the
National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018.

Dear Marlene Dortch,

United Way Monterey County appreciates the opportunity to comment on the current effort undertaken by the Federal Communications Commission to study the feasibility of designating a three-digit number to the National Suicide Hotline and to assess the effectiveness of the current National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. In Monterey County, United Way is fighting for health, education and financial stability by investing in 2-1-1, early care and education, affordable housing and asset building.

We acknowledge efforts are needed to create a safe place for all people to call – especially underserved or marginalized populations such as seniors, people with physical or intellectual disabilities, people that identify as LGBTQ+, Veterans, American Natives, non-English speakers, and individuals facing complex problems such as substance/opioid use, human trafficking, and domestic violence. Our organization has a long history of reaching out to the underserved and today we partner with dozens of business, nonprofit agencies, government stakeholders and community members to drive systemic changes to solve our community's toughest problems such as mental health crises.

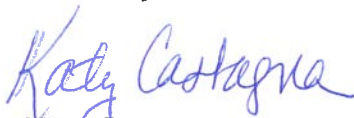
We encourage the FCC to consider our 2-1-1 work here in Monterey County as a vital partner in increasing access to suicide prevention and intervention services. Since our local launch of 2-1-1 in 2009, we have responded to approximately 10,000 requests for help each year in Monterey County. We are regularly referring to mental health, substance use, health, education, and other financial stability

services. These critical activities position us to be key partners in the success of an improved mental health and crisis response system.

Another three-digit code may erode the simplicity of a single point of access for community help. Despite concerted efforts by numerous social services, and multiple hotlines in our community to educate and market the distinctions, a person in crisis will likely always reach for the most familiar or most accessible number. Our 2-1-1 receives calls that are better suited for 911, and our 911 partners often receive calls that we can best answer. We recommend that resources should be invested to improve a unified single point of access with a blended partnership of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and United Way's 2-1-1 services. We believe in the power of partnership to address gaps, not duplicate services, and will be a valuable partner in the fight against suicide.

You can learn more about our work at unitedwaymcca.org and can reach my office for additional questions or discussion at 831-372-8026. Thank you for your time in addressing this important issue and for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Katy Castagna
President and CEO